

Just Between Us

Resolutions—will I follow through?



By William C. Nichols Ed.D.

The beginning of a new year always is a time of stocktaking. We look backward and forward. We face the past with mixed feelings. Regret mingles with remembrances of pleasure.

Typically, we look forward with some expectation and hope. The promise of a new slate appeals to us.

New Year's resolutions are a combination of things. We may vow that we will not repeat mistakes of the past. We may vow that we will not repeat mistakes of the past. We also pledge that we shall do certain things in the future. "I won't do that, I will do this" is the dual character of many New Year's resolutions.

The things that we promise ourselves not to do cover a wide range of actions. I will not procrastinate. I will not be late. I will not overindulge in (1) food, (2) alcohol, (3) smoking, (4) all of the above. And so on it goes.

NEW YEAR'S is a time of new beginnings. The things that we plan to do also are numerous and varied.

I will get enough exercise. I will try to learn how to relax. I will not work so hard.

Or, I will work harder on the important things this year. I will keep my resolutions this time (or at least the major ones). I will make a new start on . . .

This is a time of altruism as well as self-concern. Through the holidays, we give as well as get. Our New Year's resolutions may follow the same pattern.

We may vow to do at least one thing for somebody else, for spouse, children, parents, friends. On the other side, we promise to do some things for ourselves.

New Year's reminds us that the time to do what we wish to do is growing shorter. Another year has passed. Time grows shorter to record accomplishments and to enjoy life. The remainder of this column has to do with enjoying life.

IS THIS the year in which you will enjoy a new quality of life?

There are two major ways in which most of us could enjoy a new quality of life this year. One is through giving ourselves opportunity to exercise our capacities for creativity and growth.

For example, is this the year that you will do something about getting into the creative, expressive things that you have long wished to do? Learning to play the piano? The guitar? Writing poetry for your own enjoyment? Painting artwork—abstract, primitive, or merely uniquely your own? Learning to do woodworking or woodcarving?

Obviously, there are many ways in which we can be expressive and creative. These are merely illustrative.

Is this the year that you will take the plunge and open up a new area of growth for yourself?

MOST OF US also could enjoy a new quality of life this year through taking the time to see and appreciate what is around us. One man relates:

"I'll never forget watching my 2 1/4-year-old son wander across our backyard one spring day. He was in no hurry. He stopped to watch a squirrel, then chased a butterfly. Then he went over to a pine tree and carefully examined the bark. "All the time his face carried expressions of interest and enjoyment. At that time, life was really good for him, and he was enjoying it to the hilt."

Unfortunately, as we get older, squirrels, butterflies, trees, and even people become commonplace. Other things impress themselves on us.

Our minds become occupied with "larger" matters. We fail to "see" and to enjoy much that is around us. Small wonder that gimmicks impress us in classes and encounter groups.

Handed an orange and told to become acquainted with it, students often marvel at what they observe and learn. Nothing new is there. Things are qualitatively the same. We simply have not been observing and taking time to enjoy.

SEEING AND appreciating what is around us involves human relationships as well as things.

Is this a year in which you will take time to "see" and enjoy relationships with meaningful other persons, starting with those closest to you? As a football coach has put it, "the future is now."

Whatever we intend to do about enjoying life will take effort. Most of us know that there are two parts to taking action: deciding what to do and then following through.

Others can support and encourage us, but the decisions and actions are up to us. Will I follow through? That's often the nagging question in the background.

New Year's resolutions alone are not sufficient to keep us going for a year. We need concrete reminders of what we intend to do. The image of his young son's enjoyment of life serves the father as a reminder.

"I call up that image periodically, to get myself reoriented. It helps me to remember how important it is to enjoy life as you go along."

Is this the year for you?

(The writer is a practicing psychologist and marriage counselor.)

Ask the Educator

'Mainstreaming' puts stress on teacher



JOSEPH HADDAD

QUESTION: The new state and federal laws which govern the education of the handicapped have made my work much more difficult as a fifth grade teacher.

This year I have 28 students, four of whom are actually learning disabled students who are "mainstreamed" in my room most of the day. I think this is more than any regular teacher should be asked to handle.

Why shouldn't they stay in the special education room where the teacher has the correct materials and enough time to help them properly?

G. D.

ANSWER: We now know that early practices of segregating the handicapped were destructive to the

students' self-image, set them off from their peers and made later re-entry to regular education very difficult.

Today, we seek to keep mildly handicapped students in the least restrictive environment to minimize the harmful effects of separation from normal relationships.

Your complaint is becoming more common with the increase in special education programs which has resulted from state and federal legislation in the last five years.

Let's view your situation from another perspective. Since the passage of new laws we have seen great increases in the numbers of special education resources. Where, then, have all these handicapped students come from?

The answer is that they have been here all along. They were in your room 100 per cent of the time. They were not diagnosed and identified as handicapped and as recently as two or three years ago you labored with these difficult teaching problems with no help from anyone.

Today these same students spend an hour or so in a special education resource room where they get close attention and the remainder of the day with their normal peers in your fifth grade room.

SO YOU SEE, the increase in special students you are asked to serve is in large measure illusory. Once they are labeled handicapped we feel put upon if they are in our room.

Let's not be narrow in our view on this issue.

These young people need what you can give them in a normal room with normal age mates.

Nevertheless, your resource room teacher should be paying close attention to you and your mainstreamed learning disabled students.

If individualizing these students is difficult in your room, then she should be available to help you. You shouldn't need to feel so overwhelmed.

Special assignments, audio-visual, supplementary materials and similar helpful teaching tools should be made available to you by special education staff. They can and should be right there when you and your mainstreamed students need their support.

(The writer is director of special education in a suburban school district.)

YWCA to train volunteers

The YWCA of Pontiac-North Oakland will hold a 40-hour training program for all YWCA volunteers, Feb. 3-24.

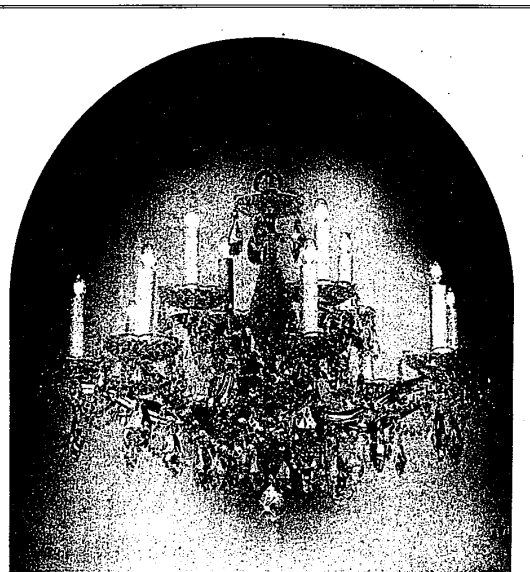
The training will encompass the goals and concerns of all YWCA programs such as the Domestic Violence

Shelter, the Oakland Crisis Center for Rape and Sexual Abuse, Day Care Center and other activities for children, teens and adults, including senior citizens.

The focus of the training will be to develop skills necessary to be a YWCA

volunteer and to encourage personal growth for the individual. Additional training may be required for some of the YWCA programs.

Interested volunteers should call Debi Cain at 334-0973.



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